

Rowers pulling together

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TCYR members fare well at Chicago regatta

By Michelle Stevens

"It shouldn't be fun, but it is," Maria Linn, a junior from Chanhassen, said at rowing practice on July 8. Linn is one of 75 rowers in the Twin Cities Youth Rowing club, which was founded two years ago – making this its third summer.

One of the appeals of the TCYR is its geographic location. For high school students in the southwest suburbs who want to row, there was not a convenient place to do so until TYCR began. Of the 75 rowers participating this season, 12 are from Chanhassen, and the others come from cities including St. Paul, Victoria, and Plymouth.

TCYR is a unique rowing program because it is all junior rowing – ages 14-18 – and offers its athletes the opportunity to row all year, something most rowing programs do not.

"Most of the kids are year-round," head coach Tina Cho said. "Their main identity as an athlete is a rower; we're the first to offer that."

Cho and boys varsity coach John Davis, or "JD" to his team, stressed that rowing is different from other sports.

"Take the fitness of a runner and the strength of a wrestler and you have a rower," Davis said.

The team practices at Bryant Lake Regional Park or the TCYR Boat House for two hours, five days a week. Each season is about 10 weeks long. Racing is a big focus, but the team spends the majority of its time practicing.

"There's about 40 hours of practice per minute of racing," Cho said.

As a new program, the TCYR club is competing with programs that have well-established programs for both juniors and adults.

"We're coming out of a participatory stage into a competitive stage," Davis said. "We're heading toward a level where we'll be regionally competitive throughout the Midwest."

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On July 9, TCYR headed to Chicago for the Chicago Sprints Regatta at the Lincoln Park Lagoon. According to the website, it is "the largest sprint-season regatta in the Midwest, and among the top 5 largest non-collegiate sprint regattas in the nation."

"There were over 10 entries in all events contested by TCYR, who placed second in the Men's Junior 4+, Men's Junior 8+, and Men's Novice 8+. TCYR also placed third in the Women's Junior 8+ and fifth in the Women's Junior 4+, making this the best TCYR performance at Chicago Sprints to date," Cho said.

"I never thought I would coach juniors," Davis said, "but I never thought I would enjoy it this much either."

He started coaching a year ago because his son wanted to try rowing and he saw it as a chance to spend more time with him.

Davis said they work hard but know how to have fun too. The rowers seemed to agree, since laughter and jokes were exchanged as they prepared the shells (boats) for their trip to Chicago.

"Tina's culture that she has created here is what sets us apart," President Karen McElrath said.

"We all support each other," varsity rower Sarkis Zenobian said. "If you don't respect each other, you don't row."

Upcoming

TCYR will be hosting its own regatta on Aug. 1. The crews will race in eight-rower shells, four-rower shells, and two-rower shells. The races are scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. and continue until 4 p.m. Each race will start at approximately 12-minute intervals and typically take five to six minutes to complete. The regatta will be at Three Rivers Bryant Lake Regional Park, 6800 Rowland Avenue, Eden Prairie. Admission is free and everyone is welcome.

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